

From Farm Forestry to Farm and Forestry in South-western France as a Result of Changes in a ‘House-centred’ Social Structure

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The importance of the ecological functions of farm forests in France calls for a better understanding of the social systems influencing forest management. The traditional ‘house-centred system’ involved a sharing of activities in farm forestry between fathers and their sons. Retired farmers were traditionally managers of the forests while their sons dealt with farming activities. The evolution of this relationship since World War 2 has been investigated with an ethnologic approach in two villages in south-western France where the traditional ‘house-centred system’ constrains the social rules. This system has led to a lifetime status for fathers as head of the farm and of the household. Before WW2, sons played a secondary role in relation to their fathers who took strategic decisions. After WW2, sons became more involved in the forest work and decisions which led to a more frequent use of agricultural methods in forests. This created differences of opinion between fathers and sons, with the fathers considering their sons’ management too intensive. The social consequence was that the fathers felt that their role as forest managers and as head of the farm was reduced. In future, farm forest management might become more dependent on agricultural activities, with the traditional social systems losing importance.

Keywords: intergenerational forest reallocation, forester and farmer status, evolution of forest management, house-centred system, France, ethnographic methodology

INTRODUCTION

Farm forests are components of French rural landscapes but their maintenance is currently suffering from a high degree of agriculture abandonment (Normandin 1996). The transformation of rural society and of agricultural activities influences their management. Understanding the social determinants of their exploitation is

important if the future landscapes and ecological structures of these forests are to be anticipated (Selter 2003). Social sciences which will reveal those determinants have to be included in the forest management research program (Marcin 1995). They allow an understanding of the linkages between the use of land and social structures and practices of local societies (Bourgeot 2000). The use of ethnographic methodology facilitates a comprehension of the evolution of exploitation of farm forests as well as the changing rural society under agricultural abandonment, notably through the transformations of intergenerational relations, social organisations and agriculture.

Agriculture is known to have a strong influence on forestry (Larrère and Nougarède 1993). However, since WW2 agricultural modernisation and specialisation have led to a diminishing interest in forest activities. This trend is demonstrated by statistical studies showing a gradual dissociation of the ownership of farm and forest during intergenerational transfer and a decrease in the area of farm forestry during the last century (Cinotti and Normandin 2002).

Some sociological inquiries have placed this decrease shown by statistical studies in context (Nougarède 1996). They have shown that a form of farm and forest dissociation in various regions of France can be explained by a different inheritance and succession scheme: fathers transfer the ownership of the farm to their son on their retirement, while retaining the forest for themselves until they die (Nougarède 1999). When the fathers retire, the farm seems to become the domain of the sons as the active farmers, while the forest belongs to the older, retired farmers. Forestry and farming then appear to be separate fields of activity leading to exclusive roles (Larrère and Nougarède 1990). These ways of intergenerational asset transfer and of succession correspond to a need for the fathers and the sons to find their legitimate places in the forest and on the farm respectively (Cardon 1999).

This dissociation seems to have been the solution to provide social status to the two generations on the farm estate especially when reallocation of the status of farmers underwent intensive changes associated with changes of the agricultural world in the 20th century. WW2 appears as a break point for this transformation of agriculture and the status of farmers and consequently also for the intergenerational relations (Mendras 1984). Before WW2, the patriarchal authority was strong; the fathers were farmers until their death, while the sons were helpers without real status on the farm. However, in the 1940s and 1950s sons began to claim recognition for their work on the farm and of their independence from their fathers. Under new legislation they were awarded real status and the right to control farm exploitation. At the same time, new social legislation made the retirement of the fathers easier (Duby and Wallon 1976).

This global situation of dissociation between spaces (forest and farm) and between social statuses has to be questioned at a local scale to understand if they actually operate, and how local social institutions deal with them. Ethnology allows this examination of local social phenomena through the ethnographic methods by the direct observation and comprehension of the behaviour of local actors in a small territory¹ (Levi-Strauss 1974). This research is aimed at gaining an understanding of the links between both socially observed behaviour and social structures, and of the links between local societies and their territories.

The reallocation of roles in relation to the farm and the forests affect the farmers' status within the social system of the farm. This system is based on a social entity (*la 'maison'*, called in patois by the local people '*la maisoun*' and translated as the '*house*') which has its own name, together with some material and non-material assets – farm, forests (which are called in patois '*bousquets*'²), houses and symbols – which are represented by a single person (Levi-Strauss 1991).

The '*house*' and the status of farmer and head of the '*house*' fall under a specific scheme of inheritance (intergenerational transfer of material or non-material assets) and of succession (transfer of social status) (Augustins 1990). The inheritance and the succession are bestowed upon a single heir or successor (usually the oldest son), in order to maintain the integrity of the property through generations (Augustins 1981b). The single person, who represents the '*house*' and is the head of the farm and of the '*house*', is the father. He is in charge of the viability of the agricultural exploitation and of the household accommodated in the '*house*'. This household is typically a stem family composite of three or four generations: grandparents, parents, unmarried uncle or brother and children (Bourdieu 2002). It is considered as a domestic group which is characterised by the co-residence of the members of a family and the sharing between them of the domestic functions on the farm and in the forest (Bender 1967).

The '*house-centred system*', by reproducing the land and household structure through the generations, also reproduces relations between similar neighbours '*houses*' and households, notably through mutual assistance for farming and forestry activities (Bonnain 1981). The father is also the representative of the '*house*' and of the '*household*' in the main institutions of the village (parish council, local associations). His status in both '*house*' and village is recognised by the entire community. The father is the lifetime head of the '*house*'. This system leads to the maintenance of the perimeters of the farm forest which is confirmed by ecological studies (Guyon 1996). The system also determines which persons are involved in forest management (forest operations) according to the social structure of the household.

The new sharing of status on the farm through the transformation of agriculture contradicts the intergenerational relations existing in the '*house-centred system*'.

¹ The term 'ethnology' is used here to refer to the French tradition of anthropological research. It is considered here as equivalent to the term 'cultural anthropology' used in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, which deals notably with the study of techniques and language. The ethnographic method corresponds to the 'fieldwork' in the Anglo-Saxon anthropological tradition (Levi-Strauss 1974).

² To the local people the term '*bousquet*' (which refers to the word *coppice*) means small wooded area inserted in agricultural territories and on farms while the term *forest* represents large surfaces of wooded area managed by foresters.

What then is going to be the result of the changes in the reallocation of the status of farmer and head of the farm in south-western France? In the ‘house-centred system’ it seems that the fathers will still keep an eye on the farm when the sons become farmers, while they specialise in the forests activities during winter. This observation confirms the dissociation between farm and forest as exclusive domains of activities shown by past sociological studies. The past sociological and statistical studies concentrated mostly on the owner of the forest. The ethnographic studies allow the exploitation of the farm forest to be examined on a finer scale than the all-encompassing scale of statistical surveys. Identifying the owner is important but other aspects of the forest activities should also be documented, such as the various roles involved in technical practices and decision-making in the forestry domain (Sourdril and Du Bus de Warnaffe 2003). To understand farm forestry, two more non-exclusive roles besides that of owner – namely decision-maker and worker –, have to be identified.

The aim of the present study is to question the dissociation between farm and forest and the intergenerational relations between fathers and sons linked to forest activities in a changing local rural society in south-west France. The first hypothesis is that some transformations of the exploitation of the farm forest exist and they can be explained by social determinants such as the evolution of the agricultural activities and of the composition of the household in the ‘house-centred society’. These lead to changes in the sharing of roles between the two generations; fathers and sons can both be owner, decision-maker and/or worker. The second hypothesis is that farm and forest are still linked and that agriculture had a constant influence on forestry during the 20th century. The sharing between the two generations has to be observed during the retirement of the fathers which is a period of reallocation of social status (active farmer to retired farmer) (Jacques-Jouenot 1997), and particularly before and after the Second World War.

RESEARCH METHOD AND TECHNIQUES (MONOGRAPHIC STUDY, INTERVIEWS AND FIELD OBSERVATIONS)

The Field Site: The ‘Coteaux de Gascogne’

The research was conducted in the ‘Coteaux de Gascogne’ region in south-west France (Figure 1). Two adjacent villages (2,012 ha with 180 inhabitants and 884 ha with 121 inhabitants) were studied. They are representative of the situation in rural communities in the Coteaux de Gascogne with two opposite trends: (1) great changes in the rural life and exploitation of the land with agriculture abandonment and the arrival of new country people, e.g. English or Dutch during the last 10 years, and (2) maintenance by adaptation of characteristics of the traditional social system due to geographical isolation. These two villages are also included in the area studied by ecologists working on an interdisciplinary project in which the present study is embedded. Agronomic characteristics of the farms and ecological structures of the small forests have already been studied for almost 15 years by researchers of the laboratory ‘Dynamiques forestières dans l’espace rural’ of the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique of Toulouse (France) (Sauget 1995, Balent 1996). The research reported here has been designed to provide an understanding of the

social determinants of the exploitation of the forests, in the context of the broader study.

There are 19 small family farms of 30 to 180 ha each scattered in the landscape of the two villages. Agriculture is based on mixed farming, with most farmers owning cattle (veal calves and dairy cows) in herds of about 100 animals. There is also free-range chicken-farming and the force-feeding of ducks. All the farmers grow wheat, maize and sorghum in parcels of 1 to 20 ha. Farmland dominates this area, which includes about 25% forest cover, with private and farm forests dominating. Farm forests cover about 4 ha per farm on average. The landscape is fragmented, with small woodlots isolated in a matrix of pastures and crop fields. The forests are mainly oak and hornbeam coppice-with-standards. Despite their small surface area, most of the woodlots have a highly heterogeneous structure, determined notably by a mosaic of practices (Sauget 1995, Tran 1995).



Figure 1. Location of fieldwork in south-west France (black square).

Research Methods and Techniques: Investigations of Relations between Two Generations of Farmers

Through fieldwork with a small sample of representative informers, the study is designed to provide an understanding of the organisation of the intergenerational relations and to highlight the social determinants of ecological wooded structures. The methodology involved the presence of the anthropologist in the field for 12 months in order to obtain detailed information on the social and rural life in the villages, the links between a social system and its land, and on the beneficial use of the forests. This allowed an appreciation of what any set of farmers represents, according to the common behaviour observed in the area. Moreover, the inhabitants of the villages in the study gave reciprocal opinions on the particularities or representativeness of the others according to their own perception of the traditional social rules.

Based on this preliminary knowledge, a set of five farms or ‘houses’ (called Farm or Family A, B, C, D and E), out of a total of 19, was selected in the two villages. They were chosen: (1) because of their representative agricultural characteristics (extension of agricultural territories, maintenance of mixed farming, tendency of intensification of production, exploitation of wooded area for heating and timber); (2) because of their social characteristics – presence of a father (retired farmer) and a son (active farmer) involved in the farm and forest activities, adaptation of the sharing out of roles among the members of the household, and destruction but also maintenance of stem families); and (3) because they contained a set of typical woodlots studied by the interdisciplinary project in which this research is embedded.

The research was based on interviews with the fathers and sons of the five ‘houses’, and on concomitant observations of the forest exploitation and of farm work. Interviews were conducted with the two generations separately and together, in order to compare their activities and points of view on the farm and the forest. This lead to a comparison between the discourses and the actual practices and roles. Contradictions between what is done and what is said to be done, can reveal the way fathers and sons want to be seen by their relatives or the community. The investigations were conducted to understand: (1) how forests were exploited during the last century and how the sharing of the three roles (owner, decision-maker and worker) has evolved during the last century; (2) how the status of farmers and the intergenerational relations between fathers and sons evolved; and (3) how forest and farm were transmitted and to whom. The memory of the informants was tapped to relate the history of the farming and forestry technical skills.

The term ‘owner’ is used here to represent the person who legally holds the land. A ‘decision-maker’ is the person who makes the strategic decisions about the general management of the forest and who makes technical decisions during field activities. A ‘worker’ is a person who undertakes labouring on the field (e.g. clearing and felling).

Techniques of Investigations: Monographic Study, Interviews and Field Observations

The techniques of the investigations were based on the presence of an anthropologist in the field for 12 months in order to obtain detailed information on the social and rural life in the villages, the links between a social system and its land and on the concrete exploitation of the forests. The fathers and the sons of the five ‘houses’ selected were met and they represented a total of 11 informants (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of interviews, visits and field observations^a

Variable or activity	Family A				Family B			Family C			Family D			Family E		
	F	S	S	F+S	F	S	F+S									
Age	75	35	34		62	33		73	51		76	50		81	54	
Interview	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	0	3	2	0
Visit	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Field observation	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	0

a. F represents fathers, S sons and F+S both fathers and sons.

Interviews were initially conducted to understand the current and past forest practices, land and households of the five 'houses'. Questions were asked about the roles of the family members in forestry and agricultural practices. Interviews were also carried out during visits to the forest and during the *in situ* observation of the current techniques, where the roles of the fathers and sons in the forest were observed. The duration of the interviews and visits was between 1.5 and 4 hours.

The interviews were supplemented by more informal information collection during social events including village fairs and through invitations to dinner. These events revealed spontaneous behaviour, social networks and particular relationships between the informants which were sometimes hidden during interviews.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed and a written record was kept of the information obtained during the visits and observations. The findings of this analysis are presented in four sections:

1. Forest management and forest products provided before WW2.
2. The evolution of forest activities and of the sharing out of roles between fathers and sons from immediately after WW2 up to 2005.
3. The current differences and discrepancies between the fathers' and sons' management due to the evolution of the forest activities.
4. The consequences of the social and technical changes in the rural society on the process of inheritance and on the reallocation of social status and roles on the farm and on the forest.

FOREST PRACTICES AND ROLES INFLUENCED BY THE EVOLUTION OF THE 'HOUSE-CENTRED SYSTEM' DURING THE 20th CENTURY

The raw results are of little interest without a qualitative interpretation referring to the social context in which the study is embedded, hence, the results are presented hereafter in sections split in two parts: the first part deals with the raw results and the second presents the interpretation or analysis of results.

Period before WW2, Role of Household and Neighbourhood in Forest Activities

According to the oldest informants, before WW2 the fathers, at the time of their 'retirement', were the owners of the forest, had usufruct rights on the farm and were the main decision-makers and workers in the forests until they were no longer physically able to do so. They were assisted by the unmarried brother who usually lived on the farm, and by neighbours of similar age through mutual assistance when the activities (particularly felling) required several people involved because of the tools used (two-handed saw) as well as the onerous nature of the work. The sons could deal with these activities but they usually just helped their fathers. Women had a secondary role to play in the forest until the 1960s. They usually dealt with clearing the undergrowth before felling, the wood bundling and forwarding, and the gathering of mushrooms (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of forest activities and roles before the Second World War

Activity	Family																			
	A				B				C				D				E			
	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	U/N	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	U/N
Clearing	DW						DW			DW		DW			W	DW		W		
Felling	DW	W		DW	DW			W	DW		W	DW	W		W	DW			W	
Forwarding	DW	W		W	DW			W	DW	W	W	DW	W			DW	DW	W		
Splitting	DW			W	DW				DW			DW	DW			W	DW		W	
Edge-cutting	DW				DW			DW	DW			W	DW				DW		W	
Cattle-grazing					DW	DW								DW		DW	DW	DW		
Bundling	D		DW			DW				DW		DW			DW		D		DW	
Planting								DW	W	W										
Mushroom gathering	DW	DW		DW	DW	DW		DW		DW				DW		DW	DW	DW		
Shooting				DW						DW	DW				DW	DW				

Definition of symbols: Decision-maker (D) and worker (W) between fathers (F), son (S), women (Wo) (mother and wife), uncle (U) and neighbours (N) (mutual assistance).

The sons in this table correspond to the persons who have become the fathers in the following tables. Before WW2 fathers were most of the time DW while sons were just W.

The forest provided firewood for the home heating system which was entirely wood-based, as well as timber for parts of the houses (e.g. roof framework, partitions) which were wood-constructed (all five families). The forest also fulfilled the farm's needs including food for cattle (Family B, D and E), and wood for making handles for tools or baskets or for farm buildings (all families). It was a source of edible plants and through hunting also of various meats (all families). The forest was an important source of income for the household, notably through firewood (Family B, C and D), white wood (poplar) which was sold to bakers (Family B, C, D and E), and bundles of small wood which were exchanged for tiles with the local tileries (Family A, B and D). However, the forest also provided non-material benefits including recreational activities (all families) and pleasant outdoors activities. According to the fathers, those activities were times of conviviality between members of the household and the neighbourhood and were physical activities which allowed them to keep fit and in good health (Family B, C, D and E).

Dissociation between forest and farm as domains of work existed, but this dissociation was rather dissociation between two generations (fathers and sons, but also neighbours, wives and relatives): the farm was the domain of the youngest and the forest was the domain of the oldest. Nevertheless, the main forest activities were the domain of the men (Fortier 1991). This dissociation was not exclusive: sons and active farmers could help their fathers or neighbours in undertaking the forest activities and even make decisions. However, fathers, neighbours and sons did not always make the same decisions, and dissociation between them appeared: (1) the fathers had the monopoly of the strategic and technical decisions about the management of the wood resources in general, while (2) the sons and the neighbours could only make technical decisions during the activity itself.

Crucial products were provided by the farm forests for everyday life and the requirements of the farm. Products extracted from the forest were meant essentially for own consumption by the farmers and their families, as in other regions of France (Gresser 1997). But farm forests also provided a considerable source of income. Furthermore, fathers became charcoal makers in the winter to provide the local blacksmiths or glassworks, as has been observed in other regions (e.g. Davasse 2000), or the local tileries (Gomez 1993).

The forest appears to have been an important domain of recognition for the fathers; they were in charge of (1) the responsibility of the future of the wood resource and of the sustainability of the farm forests, which were vital elements for rural life. Indeed, the general management of the forest was described by the informants as a great responsibility for the fathers, who (2) guaranteed the survival and the comfort of their households but also of the descendants that they would never know. The forests were managed from a long-term perspective and through their work and decisions the fathers guaranteed resources for many decades. Through this guarantee of the sustainability of the resources, fathers guaranteed their own roles in the forest. Moreover, fathers (3) were in charge of economic transactions for wood products and maintained an involvement in the local economy through their wood products.

Period after WW2, New Sharing of Forest Activities between Fathers and Sons

Since WW2, unmarried brothers, neighbours and women no longer dealt with the exploitation of the forest and sons have been more involved in forest work (Table 3). A reversal in roles in the forest relative to the period before WW2 has become obvious and nowadays all fathers still own not only the forest but also the farm. Fathers are no longer the main workers. Nevertheless, all of them still make the strategic and main technical decisions concerning the management of the wood resources. The interviews and observations showed that the fathers plan their work in the forest, and choose the felling sites as well as the species of trees to be felled. The fathers reported that they try to plan future forest exploitation for their descendants and to anticipate the future needs of their sons and grandsons even while they are still children. None of the sons is the owner but all are principal workers and decision-makers for the main forest activities including felling, forwarding, splitting and edge-cutting.

The forest still provides products such as firewood and timber but in smaller quantities than before. The heating system has become more and more fuel-oil based (Family C, D and E). The houses are built or renovated with pine which is purchased by the entrepreneurs (Family A, C, D and E). The forest still meets needs of the farm including food for cattle (Family A, B and E) and wood for making stakes (Family A and B). Forests can still be a source of income through the selling of firewood (Family A and B) or timber (Family B and C), but other markets including the tileries, blacksmiths and glassworks have disappeared. Gathering and hunting still exist, but those activities are presented as more recreational than vital (Family B, C and E).

The study reveals that the structure of the household can be explained by this new sharing of forest activities. The household is no longer the same: stem families, if they still exist (Family B), are progressively breaking up; brothers and uncles whose status of bachelor was structural to the 'house-centred system' now leave the household and marry. The different generations more often have their own homes (Family A, C, D and E). The traditional 'houses' in the neighbourhood no longer exist, leading to a decrease in the mutual assistance by neighbours in forest activities. With the social and agricultural evolution, the role of each member of the household on the farm and the forest is changing (Segalen 1984). The fathers now have to do the forest work without assistance of neighbours and so their sons help them. According to interviews and field observations, the fathers seem to have kept their power of decision-making as far as the strategic and the technical aspects of the management of the wood resources are concerned, but their former main technical role is now given to their sons. Sons take more technical decisions during logging (e.g. which tools are used, times to work), but they still need the consent of their fathers before they can act.

Table 3. Present-day distribution of forest activities and roles

Activity	Family																			
	A				B				C				D				E			
	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	N	F	S	Wo	N
Clearing	DW												DW				DW			
Felling	DW	W			D	DW			DW	DW			D	DW			D	W		
Forwarding		DW				DW		W		DW			DW	W				DW		
Splitting	D	DW			D	DW			DW	DW			DW	DW			DW	DW		
Edge-cutting	D	DW				DW		DW		DW			DW				D	W		
Cattle-Grazing		DW			DW												DW			
Bundling	DW								DW								DW			
Planting									DW											
Mushroom gathering	DW				DW	DW	DW		DW	DW			DW			DW		DW		DW
Shooting					DW				DW				DW							

Definition of symbols: Decision-Maker (D) and worker (W) between father (F), son (S), women (Wo) (mother and wife) and neighbours (N) (mutual assistance). The father in this table corresponds to the son in the previous table. Fathers and sons share more equally D and W than before WW2 but sons are more W than their fathers. After WW2, although the general practices in the forests stayed the same, their importance, the people involved in them, their roles and the way the practices were undertaken (tools, times) changed.

The new sharing of activities can also be explained by a change in the importance of wood resources in the rural areas. First, fewer forest products are now used so fewer people have to be involved in forest activities and the forests no longer provide such crucial products as before WW2. The disappearance of tileries and blacksmiths has not been compensated by other industries, such as paper mills and sawmills. Second, the fathers are still the guarantors of the sustainability of the wood resources but according to the informants the importance of the forest in everyday life is declining and with it the prestige of forest activities. For example, fathers are no longer responsible for providing their sons with forest products because the sons now live with their own nuclear families and do not share forest products with their parents as they did before WW2. The forest is no longer a place where fathers find activities which increase their essential role on the farm estate when their sons become the principal farmer. By entrusting part of the forest activities to their sons, they can remain in charge of particular farm activities such as the force feeding of ducks or rearing the calves. These farm activities take place in winter as do the forest activities and are the major responsibilities in which the fathers are involved. The fathers then attempt to retain their power over both forest and farm by being the decision-maker for the general farm and forest activities as well as the worker in the high-value activities.

Sharing of Forest Activities Leads to Differences of Opinion

When the fathers hand the forest activities over to their sons, they have difficulty accepting this new sharing of work and decision-making in the forest. According to most of the fathers and sons this then leads to differences of opinions and actions. These can be attributed to differences between their practices as well as the effect these practices have on the sustainability of the wood resources.

Initially fathers described their relations with their own fathers before WW2 as non-antagonistic (all families). They claimed that the forest activities were not a source of conflict between them as is the case with their sons today. However, as the discussion progressed they talked about their own fathers' authority (Family A), the fact that they were in charge of the more unrewarding activities (Family B, D and E) and that after the death of their father they did what they wanted with the forest (all the fathers).

Nowadays, there are obvious differences in actions but also in opinions about technical decisions made and tools chosen by the sons to exploit the forest. All the following examples of differences and discrepancies reflect the fathers' concern that insufficient attention is given to promoting vegetation regrowth:

- Fathers and sons disagree about the timing for cutting firewood; for the fathers it has to be done in winter in descending sap because this period favours the regrowth of the trees.
- Fathers and sons do not work in the same way, as could be seen in the cutting of firewood where the father stacks the wood and the son leave it on the ground before it is forwarded (families A, B, D and E).
- Fathers believe in clearing the undergrowth before felling whereas sons think this serves no purpose (families A, B and D).

- Fathers disagree with sons who prefer to clear the edges with chemicals and herbicides to reduce their work rather than cutting the branches or felling the trees. For the fathers this use of chemicals leads to the destruction of species of trees, other plants, mushrooms and animals and insects (Family A, C, D and E). They also feel that it causes a dirty colour around the edges of the forest which disturbs the appearance of the landscape (Family A, C and D).

Fathers disapprove of the intensity of their sons' practices which runs counter to the fathers' objective of conservation and long-term sustainability of forest resources. However, their own past practices were also intensive (cutting of firewood was more frequent and the quantity cut was greater) but according to the fathers these practices allowed the regeneration of the forest. Sons agree with their parents but they retort that because of the farm activities they cannot use the more time-consuming or traditional methods to deal with the forest activities. This study reveals that the two generations agree that the future of the farm forests is at stake but differ in their views about how to guarantee this future.

What is rejected by the fathers, but also to a certain extent by the sons, is the negative influence of farm activities on forest activities and also of modern agriculture itself. They reject modern tools and methods used in the forest or any disrespect of the calendar of the forest activities. For the fathers and the sons, short-term maximizing production objectives of the farm are not consistent with the long-term objectives of the forest. The fathers' arguments against these practices are strident. However, the fathers themselves set up these agricultural practices based on research into productivity and intensive use of the land (clearing of hedges and creation of large farmable fields)³, which were adopted as part of the forest activities from the 1950s. At that time the fathers, who were then the sons, set up a new form of agriculture because of the general modernisation in this domain (associated with mechanisation) and because of their willingness to be more independent of their own fathers, as heads of the farm, and of their fathers' hard way of life⁴. Now that they are in the position of being the retired father themselves, they find it difficult to cope with the decrease in responsibilities which follows their retirement, especially in the 'house-centred system' where the status of head of the house and representative of the 'house' in the village is linked to these responsibilities. They forget that they contributed to this decrease and blame their sons' independence. The fathers may feel deprived of their status as head of the farm, even though they are still in charge and their sons always take into account their opinion about any forest or farm work. Nevertheless, the fathers are unhappy about this situation because they think they enjoy less recognition from their families. Consequently, they feel they have lost their image as an important person in the community through the decrease of their status and their roles in social institutions such as mutual aid for forest work or forest economic transactions which were important in the past.

These contradictions are obvious in the forest activities. The fathers now hand some technical responsibilities for the forest activities to their sons because they do not want to be confined to a specific domain which excludes them from the farm. On

³ This was mentioned specifically by Mendras (1984).

⁴ Marcel Jollivet in the book edited by Duby and Wallon (1976) described this evolution of the relationship between fathers and sons on the farm.

the other hand, they reject the modern practices of their sons because they want the forest and their status to be preserved as part of modern agriculture. The forest has to be a non-controlled area with non-intensive activities (Marty 2000) where they can secure their status as head of the ‘house’, rather than the farm which leads to intensive and controlled technical activities and officially defined status. The forest reflects the difficulty of the fathers in finding their place on the farm estate but is a domain where their status can be expressed.

Modification of Inheritance and Succession Schemes

As an answer or in an attempt to remain the head of the ‘house’, the fathers adapt the process of the passing on of the farm and the forest and then of succession. Before WW2, the pattern of inheritance and succession of the ‘house-centred system’ meant that the entirety of the ‘house’ was given to the oldest son, but the farm and the forest were transferred respectively on the marriage of the heir and on the death of the father (all families). The other children were totally excluded from the inheritance (Family C, D and E) or in wealthy families they were given other assets or money as compensation (Family A and B).

Inheritance and succession of the farm and of the forest took place at different times. The passing on of the farm took place with the help of a notary just before the marriage of the heir; the farm was officially given to him but the house and forest remained the usufruct (property) of the father (Family B, C and E). For families A and D, the succession took place on the marriage of the oldest son but the inheritance took place later. The forest was always kept by the father until his death.

Nowadays, a different system operates for all of the families except Family C. The forest and the ‘house’ are given to the sons on the death of the fathers and the passing on of those assets is carried out officially at that time (Family A, B, D and E). As far as the farm is concerned, the sons become the official farmers at the time of the father’s official retirement but the farm is not given to the sons at this time. The fathers will give them a particular area of land for farming to help the sons get established as farmers and to allow them to obtain the national assistance for young farmers, but the effective transfer of the entire farm takes place on the death of the father (Family A, B, D and E).

In the past, the difference in the passing on of the farm and the forest could be interpreted as a special reallocation of social status. In fact, the fathers handed the role of farmers to their sons on their symbolic ‘retirement’ which coincided with the wedding of their sons. The newly married couple could replace the parents and take care of the latter during their old age. But the fathers retained a special role in the forest and also on the farm. By living in the ‘house’, they kept their status as head of the family and head of the farm (Augustins 1990), which was not the case in other systems in northern France. Here succession led to a splitting up of the farm into small parts and children and parents did not live together, hence everyone was the head of their own property (Pingaud 1978, Segalen 1985). This means of succession was a way for the fathers to preserve their social status as head of the farm and of the household, to reproduce the household and to award a respective role to each member of the family.

Currently the fathers adapt the process of inheritance and of succession. The fathers confer the status of farmer to their sons at the time of their official retirement but the actual time of inheritance is delayed as long as possible. Official papers of

inheritance are still completed with the assistance of a notary when the fathers become very old or sick. It is rare for the fathers to die without having made a partition or a donation of their goods to their children, as if they wanted to decide the future of their property themselves. This way of inheritance and succession reflects the eagerness of the fathers to retain the status of head of the farm and of the 'house' which they feel they have progressively lost because of their official retirement. The solution for them is to keep the farm, to remain the official owner and head, and therefore the main decision-maker for the farm and forest. Table 4 provides a summary of the results and interpretations discussed above.

Table 4. Summary and interpretations of results

Result	Interpretation
1. During the period before World War 2, the forests were the domain of the oldest men (fathers and uncles of the farmer and older neighbours). The sons merely had secondary roles in forest exploitation.	There was dissociation between the roles of the two generations. Fathers were in charge of the forest which provided crucial products for life. Forests were a domain of recognition for the fathers.
2. During the period after WW2 and up to now a new sharing of activities has developed between fathers and sons. Even if fathers stay the owner, decision-maker and worker in the forest; the sons now have a greater role to play as decision-maker and worker.	The evolution of the composition of the household can explain the new sharing of activities. However, it can also be explained by the decrease of the importance of forest products in everyday life and the concern of the fathers to retain their social status and a domain of recognition. Now the fathers delegate forest work to their son in order to deal with most important activities on the farm.
3. The new sharing of forest activities lead to differences of opinion about forest exploitation between fathers and sons; These differences concern the sustainability of the exploitation and the wooded resources. Fathers find their sons' activities too intensive.	The new reallocation of social status in agriculture is at stake. Retired fathers think they have lost their status of head of the 'house' and of the 'farm'. They express their eagerness to maintain their status and roles by rejecting their sons' forest practices which are influenced by intensive and controlled agricultural activities and by giving preference to non-intensive and non-controlled activities in the forest.
4. The process of passing on of the farm and the forest to the sons is modified by the fathers. Farms which were transmitted at the wedding of the heir during the period before WW2 are now only transmitted with the forest at the death of the fathers.	By changing the time of passing on of farms and forests, the fathers try to change the time of succession. By remaining the owners of the entire 'house' they try to retain their status as head of the farm and of the 'house'.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Forest and farm are effectively not exclusive domains between father and son in the Coteaux de Gascogne: both generations had a role to play in the farm and in the forest before WW2 and still retain that role. Nevertheless, if the forest was the domain of the retired farmer in the past, nowadays the gradual involvement of the son in the farm forestry leads to discrepancies between fathers and sons. Some of the discrepancies reveal a greater concern about maintaining the future of the wood resources than about the crucial differences in practices. The discrepancies in the fathers' arguments represent a way for them to manifest their opposition to the changes in agriculture and the 'house-centred system' and their desire to keep alive both this system and their status as head of the 'house', of the household and of the farm and forest.

In some ways the forests appears as to be a specific part of the 'house'. A new form of farm and forest dissociation through intergenerational inheritance has appeared since the 1990s. In fact, the Coteaux de Gascogne is an area of high-level agricultural abandonment. On the retirement of the father, a growing number of farms have no potential successor because the parents have no children or the children have jobs in towns located 20 to 100 km from the farm and they do not want to settle in the country. What happens then on the death of the parents? The 'house' is gradually divided up in three stages. First, the fields are rented or sold to neighbouring farmers. Second, the house is increasingly often sold to non-agricultural people (neo-ruralites). Finally, the forests are never rented or sold, but are passed on to other members of the family. Fathers want the forest and the wood resources to be conserved because it is ultimately the last part of the 'house' which is going to remain the property of members of the household.

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